

[Robert Carter]

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Range-lore

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San Angelo, Texas.

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RANGE-LORE

Robert Carter came from Virginia in the early part of 1883. He and his wife were both Carters of "The Carters", being F.F. V's from Colonial days. Although Mr. Carter worked in West Texas, he and Mrs. Carter seem not to have lived in the manner of Westerners or Texans but have been able to surround themselves with the atmosphere of the [ante-bellun?] days of Virginia.

Mr. Carter tells, "I was farming in Virginia in 1881-82. My wife and I had been married about eight months. She was a Carter, too. Our cousin, Dr. Robert Carter was stationed at Fort [Concho?] and another cousin, Cassius Carter, lived here. Dr. Robert wrote and asked me to come to Angela*

*San Angelo was originally named Sante Angela, in honor of Mother Superior of the Ursline Convent in San Antonio.

and manage a ranch for him. To us Texas was a wild, half-civilized 2 country and I asked my wife what we should do. 'We'll go,' she said. 'There are too many Carters in Virginia.' I sold my fine horses and cattle and left my fields. We packed everything, our Virginia

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hams and sausage, our canned and preserved fruits, and everything else for we thought we were coming to a barren country. We traveled and shipped our goods by train from Virginia, Fairfax County, to St. Louis, Missouri and from there to Abilene, Texas. At Abilene we found no way to transport our goods to Angela and it was two months before we did get them but Mrs. Carter and I boarded the stage. Just as we left Abilene a norther blow up. It was so cold that my teeth shattered for the first time in my life. I wrapped my wife up and held her on the seat of that rough old coach which was drawn by four broncos. It was night when we got to Runnels. There Mrs. Sol Schoonover got on the stage with a small child. That child called for water all the time and we all became very thirsty. Mrs. Schoonover finally slipped down between the seats and slept- on my feet. She was a very heavy women, too. I think I never had a more miserable time. Cousin Robert took care of us and made us comfortable after we got here. Then we went on to the ranch at the north of Dry Creek. The house where we were to stay was an adobe. The front part was floored but the shed part just had a dirt floor. There was no fence and the sheep went around and around the 3 house. 'Lou', said I to my wife, 'let's go back home. We can't live like this and it will be easy to send our goods back.' 'No', said Lou, 'they would laugh at us.'

"There was another cousin on the ranch but I didn't take any orders from him. He was a very pious fellow. He spent one whole Sunday duck hunting then the next morning shaved and dressed to go to town. 'Why are you going on with your damned work on the sabbath?' he said. I answered, 'This is Monday,' but he had to come to town to find out that it was not the sabbath.

"After my cousin sold his ranch, I worked for [Morton?] and Darlington, the Indiana and Ohio Cattle Company with headquarters on Grape Creek. The early days were hard on the men but I liked ranch work. However, Mrs. Carter did not like to live on a ranch so we moved into town. I was then in the wool business buying and selling for twenty-five years, beginning at the old wool-scouring plant.

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"My uncle, Moe Carter, was an officer in the United States Army and was stationed in Texas before the Civil War, to fight Indians. He was wounded by an arrow and came home to see us in Virginia just before the war started. He would not desert his flag and fought with the Union but was killed at [Murfreesboro?].

"I can remember the battles of [Manassas?] and Bull Run. They were just eight miles apart. McDowell and his soldiers flanked [Beauregard?] near the Henry house. When Cousin Welby 4 Carter saw the Yankees he got on his black horse and rode nine miles to tell General Beauregard that McDowell had flanked him; and the Yankees never knew how the Rebels found out their movements. The battles were fought on twenty-eight acres belonging to the Henry family. The home was demolished and old Mrs. Henry was killed in her bed. My father was four years in Stuart's Cavalry in the Southern Army and surrendered at Appomattox. I remember well that I was a small boy in the backyard playing with the little negroes, when grandmother came to the little porch, called the slaves and told them they were free. 'You may take the things from your cabins with you, she said, 'but the plantation will have to be worked and if you wish to stay, you shall be paid.' Most of the slaves cried but thought if they were free they would have to leave. Every night when the sun would begin to get low and the shadows grow long we would see them slipping back to their cabins. Some who got away would write back, 'Dear Missus, send me money to come home. I want to die on the old plantation.'

"My cousins in Washington, where I have visited many times, know John Wilkes Booth, the actor who shot Lincoln. They were his friends. The story that he was a second-rate actor is false. These cousins of mine were attending Ford's Theater the night Lincoln was assassinated and Booth held the audience spellbound. I have never believed Booth was 5 executed. Two of my young boy cousins had a small skiff on the [Potomac?] for pleasure and late one afternoon two men approached them and asked them if they would take a wounded confederate soldier across the river. The boys did but when it became known, they came near getting into very serious trouble. I have a picture of Booth's brother which

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he gave to my wife. Booth and his brother were handsome men. General Wade Hampton gave me a small mule which I rode. The mule would pitch me off and my slate and batter cakes would all be mashed together. I have seen Virginia burning- homes, barns, fields, woods- set afire by General Burnside.

“After Mrs. Carter and I moved back to Angela from the ranch we made many friends, some of whom are still here. [Parson?] Potter was a wonderful fellow and a good friend.

“On the ranches where I worked, I always rode good horses but never any very wicked ones. Stage robbers were frequent and furnished excitement. The robbers were generally caught and tried.” Range-lore

Nellie B. Cox

San Angelo, Texas.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Robert Carter, San Angelo, Texas, interviewed, February 16, 1938.